

# **KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **STAFF NOTE**

### **Review Item:**

Status of the Kentucky Alternate Assessment System

### **Applicable Statute or Regulation:**

703 KAR Chapter 5, Assessment and Accountability, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and No Child Left Behind

### **History/Background:**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as well as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), requires that *all* students, including those with disabilities, participate in state assessment. Most students with disabilities participate in the general CATS assessment with or without specific accommodations. A few students with the significant cognitive disabilities are permitted to participate in an alternate state assessment (generally around 1% because only that percent of proficient scores are reportable).

Kentucky has less than 1% of our total student population on alternate assessment (around 4700 students). An individual education plan team determines whether a student with disabilities participates in general assessment, general assessment with accommodations or alternate assessment; however, participation in alternate assessment is for students with only the most significant cognitive disabilities. One reason for the importance of the team's decision regarding alternate assessment is that when a student participating in alternate assessment becomes age equivalent to a 12<sup>th</sup> grader or is in his/her last anticipated year of school, he/she is a non-diploma student and receives a certificate.

Prior to the requirements of IDEA and NCLB, the Kentucky Department of Education developed its alternate assessment in 1992. It was called the Kentucky Alternate Portfolio Assessment. This *portfolio* system showcased the following:

- Student work on Academic Expectations
- Generalization of learning to integrated environments
- Supports provided to students
- Opportunities to develop relationships within the learning environment
- Instruction on self-determination skills related to learning and living

The focus was on improving the quality of programming for students so students could have the opportunity to achieve. While this was innovative at that time, the alternate assessment portfolio was ruled non-compliant with the latest federal requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

The current requirement is that students with disabilities be assessed on the same content areas as non-disabled peers and that alternate assessment standards be linked to state standards. Another difference is that teachers must evidence that assessment occurs annually. Our alternate assessment did not meet these requirements. Based on our non-compliant alternate assessment, special conditions were placed on the state's IDEA funding and the Kentucky Department of Education's Title I administrative funds. This not only placed funding in jeopardy but also rendered us ineligible for other assessment flexibility options such as the possibility of an additional modified assessment for around 2% more special education students.

The chart below reflects the changes that were necessary to comply with new requirements. It compares the previous alternate portfolio to the current alternate assessment system:

<b>Previous Assessment Portfolio</b>	<b>Current Assessment Program</b>
1. Multi-year submission- portfolio could include up to three years of collected student work but turned in for accountability purposes only in grades 4, 8, and 12.	1. Yearly submission-students must participate in assessment at the same grades as students without disabilities (grades 3-8)
2. Integrated with links to Program of Studies-not to specified content area at each grade level.	2. Content must be specifically <i>linked</i> to each of the seven grade level content areas; criterion and difficulty reduced for individual performance level; reduced number of standards; special education teachers participated in selection of content standards for assessment.
3. Portfolio scored holistically- one score for all student work.	3. Each content area addressed separately just as they are for students without disabilities.
4. Score for the portfolio was applied to each content area – spread across all content whether or not it was addressed.	4. Assessed and scored separately for each content area and each area receives a specific (perhaps different) score.
5. Portfolio assessment measured the <u>program</u> and opportunities it provided students with severe disabilities.	5. Kentucky Alternate Assessment Portfolio measures student achievement against alternate achievement standards <i>linked to</i> grade level content.
6. Portfolios scored by teachers.	6. Kentucky Alternate Assessment Portfolio scored by Measured Progress in partnership with Inclusive Large Scale Standards and Assessment (ILLSA).
7. Links to Program of Studies and Core Content not as apparent due to holistic scoring.	7. Content specific <i>links</i> required by NCLB.
8. Teachers accessed limited parts of the Program of Studies.	8. Teachers must have knowledge across the Program of Studies.

9. Meaningful, more functional life skills seemed more apparent.	9. Academic content reduced in complexity. Content taught and assessed in a meaningful/functional manner that is applied to life skills
10. Teachers trained initially and then attended updates and scoring training in the assessment only.	10. Trainings conducted with research and feedback indicating extensive trainings are necessary for special education teachers in applying academics to functional, inquiry-based learning, cognitive strategy approach, and collaborative strategies for all teachers.
11. Measured mostly the program quality and not student achievement. 70% of the students in the alternative assessment program obtained a score of distinguished that was applied across 7 content areas for the school's accountability.	11. The revised assessment will measure student achievement and scores will be based upon respective content areas.

As the alternative assessment system has been established, the following four outcomes have been used to guide the process:

1. Promote high expectations and quality instruction that will meet the individual needs of the student;
2. Develop a system that will make assessment a more natural part of the instructional program;
3. Utilize an alternate assessment system that meets state and federal requirements; and,
4. Establish an alternate assessment system that meets technical adequacy.

### **Implications For KDE Work:**

KDE is reflecting upon the alternate assessment system that has been implemented during the 2006-2007 school year and the following midcourse adjustments are needed:

1. Additional training is needed for teachers in curriculum development and overall understanding of changes.
2. Specific examples must be developed and disseminated to exemplify how to use links to grade level standards to meet specific student needs.
3. The pace of implementation can and needs to be slowed at this juncture due the magnitude of the changes required.
4. Some local school districts were better equipped to implement the changes than others and future training should be differentiated to address the level of expertise of the particular audience.
5. Additional training for parents will be conducted.

**Impact of Getting to Proficiency:**

The alternative assessment system aligns high expectations for students based on their individual needs, meets compliance with state and federal requirements, and promotes the use of the most recent research in the areas of teaching and learning.

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**Deputy Commissioner**

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**Interim Commissioner of Education****Date:**

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